

FEEDLOT TECHNICAL WORKPAPERS PROCEEDING

During the period August 2000 through January 2001, work continued on the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for Animal Agriculture. In August, the results of the Technical Work Papers (TWP) contractor selection process were announced. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) discussed the scope of work in the existing TWP contracts and how any unexpended funds might be used once all the TWP's were under contract.

Priorities for further research work were discussed and agreed to by the CAC. The Soil Phosphorus Index, Air Quality Dispersion Modeling and Health Effects of Air Emissions were the highest priorities of the group for additional study. Several contractors made brief presentations on their initial workplans and sought feedback from CAC. These TWP's will examine a number of critical areas and questions in greater depth than the 1,500-page Literature Summary completed previously by the University of Minnesota and their partners.

The major areas of investigation for the TWP's will include:

1. Overall Description of Animal Agriculture
2. Social and Community Topics
3. Land Use and Conflict Resolution
4. Role of Government
5. Economic Impacts
6. Water Quality Issues
7. Air Quality Issues
8. Soils and Manure Issues
9. Human Health Issues
10. Animal Health and Welfare

In September, CAC began fundamental work on the ongoing policy development and recommendation process. EarthTech consultants, who were selected to complete the TWP's for Human Health and also Air Quality, gave a presentation on their initial work in Human Health. Jean Coleman from Biko Associates and Dr. Wynne Wright from the University of Minnesota made a joint presentation on the criteria for selecting case studies to be used in the TWP's on Land Use and Conflict

Resolution, as well as for Social Aspects of Animal Agriculture in Minnesota. While the contractors are collecting the detailed information, CAC is processing and digesting the data to extract meaningful trends and project the results of future actions.

CAC will have to sort through the complex linkages between the economic, social, public health and environmental aspects of the animal agriculture industry. This requires a careful balancing of the real costs and benefits from any proposed actions that might be taken. CAC members were selected to assist the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and the Minnesota Legislature in this difficult task.

In October, Scott Freburg of the Land Management Information Center and George Howse of the National Agricultural Statistics Service spoke on the Minnesota Feedlot Inventory project they were completing as part of the GEIS. Their presentation gave indications of how the powerful tools of the Geographic Information Systems and spatial analysis would be used to help answer questions.

November's meeting featured a talk by Don Aird of the Federal Food and Drug Administration and the role his agency plays in animal agriculture. Marlene Halverson, our contractor for the Animal Welfare TWP, made an initial presentation of her findings.

In December, CAC heard Dr. Kirk Smith from the MN Department of Health talk about epidemiology and the issue of antibiotic resistance in farm animals. We also heard representatives from EarthTech give their initial presentation on the Human Health TWP. The CAC then began work on their initial policy recommendations for this controversial area.

The EQB continues to wrestle with the difficult issues of environmental impacts in the complex case of Hancock Pro Pork's Environmental Impact Statement.

The EQB has posted information on the Animal Agriculture GEIS process on its Minnesota Planning website at: www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/geis/.

Next steps

The CAC will continue to review the draft and final TWP's offering constructive criticism and extracting knowledge to help suggest the bases for future policy recommendations. It is expected that the final TWP's and the resulting GEIS will be posted on the web as portions are completed. This collection of documents should give the most current and comprehensive picture of many inter-related aspects of Animal Agriculture available. In addition, when it is complete the GEIS will identify the further research needed to more completely understand the impacts of feedlots on Society, Human Health and the Environment.

New CAC Member

The 24-member Advisory Committee, appointed by the EQB under direction from the Legislature, is charged with ensuring that the public, including interest groups and stakeholders, is involved in shaping the feedlot study and its findings.

The EQB welcomed Kent Sulem from the MN Association of Townships to the CAC.

Background

Animal agriculture is a major component in Minnesota's economy. Recently it has gone through dramatic and unprecedented changes. A decade-long trend of increasing consolidation of smaller farms into larger ones, a continuing shift to bigger feedlots, and public concern over feedlot impact have generated much attention and controversy throughout our state. New public health concerns arising from odor, antibiotics, and hormone use, may cause us to rethink some aspects of modern farming. The rapid globalization of agriculture and all other commerce is causing us to reevaluate what we mean by the "family farm". We are seeing new production efficiencies and economies of scale. We are

also seeing new problems and diseconomies of scale.

As a result of all these concerns and issues, the 1998 Legislature directed the EQB to conduct a statewide study of animal agriculture and feedlots to assess their present and projected impact on Minnesota. The study, a Generic Environmental Impact Statement, is examining the effects of animal agriculture and feedlots on Minnesota's economy, health, environment and quality of life. The objective of the study is to provide balanced information on animal agriculture and recommendations on future options for animal agriculture in the state. This GEIS will not answer all possible questions, but it will provide an objective foundation to tell us what we do know and direct future investigation.

The comprehensive study is believed to be the first in the U.S. to explore the statewide impact of the entire livestock industry. When completed, the study will offer Minnesotans and their policymakers scientific data on the livestock industry and recommendations on future options for the industry. The current plan is for the final GEIS to be completed by December 30, 2001.

The **Environmental Quality Board**, staffed by Minnesota Planning, draws together five citizens and the heads of 10 state agencies that play a vital role in Minnesota's environment and development. The board develops policy, creates long-range plans and reviews proposed projects that would significantly influence Minnesota's environment.

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